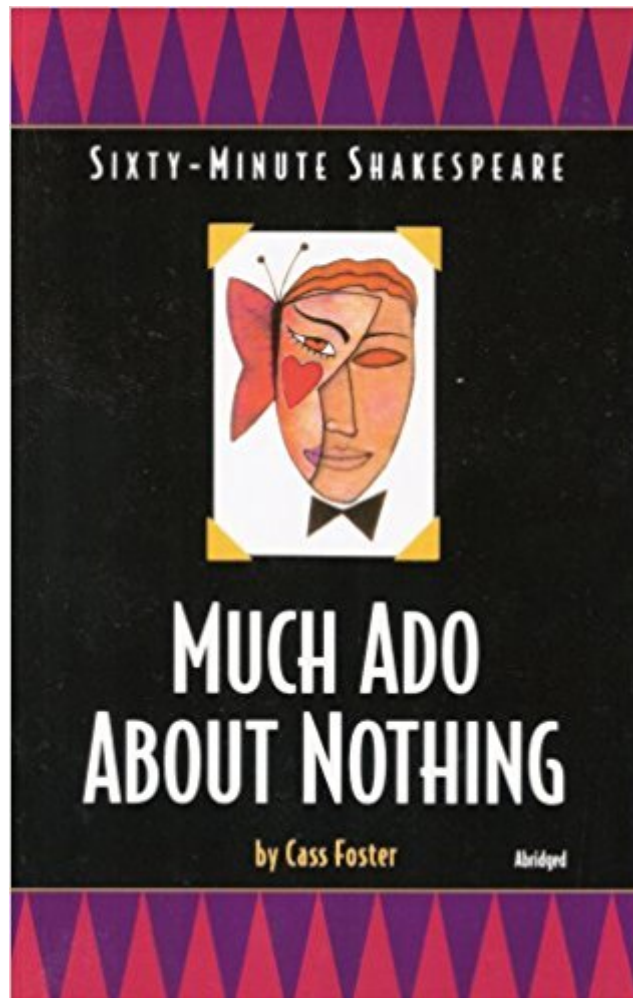




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Sixty-Minute Shakespeare Series: Much Ado About Nothing



Synopsis

The works of William Shakespeare are timeless and they are time-consuming. Too valuable to be passed over by today's younger generation, Shakespeare's plays are, nonetheless, all too often avoided by students and teachers alike. Author Cass Foster, who has been involved in all aspects of theatre for over 35 years, has provided a solution. The Sixty-Minute Shakespeare series is an ideal alternative for those who lack the time to tackle the unabridged versions of the world's most widely read playwright. Foster has condensed the Bard's language, but has left the integrity of Shakespeare's writings intact so that students can experience the thrill of his stories as well as the beauty of his prose. In addition, the author has provided footnotes explaining some of the more arcane words and phrases so that the reader can better understand and, therefore, enjoy the plays. This new series contains *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Twelfth Night*, *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Hamlet*. Foster is quick to point out that The Sixty-Minute Shakespeare series is intended to be merely a stepping stone in the study of Shakespeare, not a substitute for the original works. He urges readers, Go beyond the Sixty-Minute versions, using the appreciation and self-confidence you gained to go further. The more you read, the more you gain. An ideal companion piece, *Shakespeare: To Teach or Not to Teach* was co-authored by Foster and Lynn G. Johnson. This manual helps teachers prepare and present the teachings of Shakespeare from as early as second grade all the way through high school. Foster is the director of a theatre program in a small college in central Arizona and currently the fight choreographer for the Grand Canyon Shakespeare Festival. He has directed shows and staged fights at theatres and universities throughout the country.

Book Information

Series: Sixty-Minute Shakespeare

Paperback: 69 pages

Publisher: Five Star Publications, Inc. Chandler, AZ; 4 edition (December 12, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1877749427

ISBN-13: 978-1877749421

Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 0.3 x 8.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 4.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 9 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,410,390 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #77 in *Books > Children's*

Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > Renaissance #203 in [Books > Children's](#)
[Books > Arts, Music & Photography > Performing Arts > Drama & Theater](#) #654 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Movements & Periods > Renaissance](#)

Age Range: 11 and up

Grade Level: 8 and up

Customer Reviews

I was never very fond of Shakespeare, with his archaic language and complicated plots that seemed to go on forever. And, while I can still recite parts of Lady MacBeth's soliloquy, compliments of a drama class many (many) years ago, I wouldn't list the great author's works among my favorites to read. Cass Foster has set about to change that with his new series *The Sixty-Minute Shakespeare*. While his versions of the great classics are unchanged in their Old English language and intricate plots, he has successfully shortened the plays to foster accessibility for readers such as myself. The *Sixty-Minute Shakespeare* series is written with an eye toward the theater. Whether used for scene work in a drama class or as a fully staged production, each play contains staging tips for scenery and pacing. For the classroom teacher or even the avid learner, the books also include images and themes from Shakespeare's works, related websites, and a liberal sprinkling of footnotes throughout each play to explain and/or define the archaic terminology. "Much Ado About Nothing," one of several plays in the series, follows Cass' unique format. The plot, while shortened to an hour runtime (if performed) still tells the story of Claudio, Hero and Don John. When Don John tricks Claudio into believing that his love, Hero, has been unfaithful, he leaves her. Hero's father, upon learning the truth, manipulates Claudio into reuniting with his beloved. Woven into this is the compelling love story between Beatrice and Benedick, tricked by friends into loving each other, only to realize that their feelings for one another were there from the start. The *Sixty-Minute Shakespeare* series is the perfect compromise for readers wishing to enjoy the brilliance of a true master without spending hours with each play. It is also ideal for the teacher desiring to introduce his/her students to the same experience within the limited time frame of a classroom. On several levels, *The Sixty-Minute Shakespeare* --Marcia Berneger, Muse Book Reviewer

In search of a suitable Shakespeare play for class 10, I finally found my way to Five Star Publications and the *Sixty Minute Shakespeare* by Cass Foster. Not only that students could experience - and enjoy - the richness of Shakespeare's language and the age that made him, but also that we were able to perform the play in exactly 60 minutes, was really amazing. Mr Foster's abridged version of the *midsummer night's dream* or any other Shakespeare play is an ideal means for school performances. With thanks, Elke

Keller, Germany --Elke Keller, GermanyI want to commend you on an excellent product and fabulous service. I taught Much Ado About Nothing in the seventh for three years. The first year, I used the full text. This was not a very successful endeavor. The students couldn't delve very deeply into the play with the limited amount of school time we had. The next two years, I used the 60 Minute Shakespeare text. It was wonderful. I found it to be much more accessible than the full text, and because of this, my students were able to thoroughly study and enjoy the play. I plan to use it this year to teach Much Ado About Nothing to a group of homeschooling students that range from seventh to tenth grade. This is really the only way to teach a full Shakespearean play in the time allowed in a school year. Thank you again for not only producing a great product but for having excellent customer service as well! --Alyshia Jensen

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Cass Foster, author of The Sixty-Minute Shakespeare series, Shakespeare for Children: The Story of Romeo and Juliet, and the co-author of Shakespeare: To Teach or Not to Teach has been involved in all aspects of theatre for over thirty-five years. He is the director of a theatre program at a small college in central Arizona and often spends his summers as Fight Choreographer with Shakespeare Festivals. Cass directs productions and stages fights for theatres and universities throughout the country. He earned his bachelors degree in Drama from the University of Washington in Seattle and his Master of Fine Arts in Directing from the University of Illinois,

Champaign-Urbana. Besides his obvious involvement in the field of Shakespeare, Cass is particularly interested in the development of new plays for young audiences.

This was too long for our planned use. Waws looking for somwthing Like "Shakespeare in a Box".

Reviewed By: Aaron Garrett, Eclectic Homeschool Online This is an abridged version of Shakespeare's play, *Much Ado About Nothing*, designed so that you can read through it fairly quickly and so that it can be performed in a shorter period of time than Shakespeare's original version. This is indicated by the series name, *Sixty-Minute Shakespeare*. The play begins with several men coming back from a war, and Count Claudio and Lord Benedick find that they are in love with the daughter (Hero) and niece (Beatrice) of governor Leonato. The play unfolds as evil Don John tries to destroy their love. Cass Foster has done a wonderful job editing the play to be short enough to read it casually, but long enough to keep all the important details. Foster has also made it easy to use the book as a script to guide a director and cast in producing the play. Features that assist in this include a complete detail of the cast before the play starts, a spot at the end of each act for the actors/director to take notes, definitions of Old English terms, and ideas on how to perfect the play with tips on scenery and pacing. If you want an overview of a particular Shakespeare play, but don't have the time to read it, or if you are looking for a good script for a class play, I would definitely pick this and the other abridged versions in this series.

I was pleasantly surprised by how easy these are to read and follow. The language of the texts has been condensed, yet not changed or modernized. Just as in some of my college texts, notes are given at the bottom of each page to help the reader follow the language. But the best thing about these, to me, is that they are formatted both for reading and acting out the plays. I went ahead and read mine and now have my son and daughter acting out several of the exciting individual scenes. I really felt unable to do this before on my own, but this book allows this non-thespian to make Shakespeare fun for my kids!

I facilitate a mother/daughter book group, fifth and sixth graders and thier moms. We decided to do a play read this year and, after looking at the offerings under children's theater (boring, trite, tired), we decided to tackle Shakespeare. At first I tried cutting the play down myself, but this is much harder than you'd think! I was delighted when I ran across Cass Foster's series. It's not dumbed down, it uses the original language and has excellent vocabulary helps. Of course the girls didn't get

everything that was going on in the play when they read it at home, but when we got together for the reading, it went fantastically well and now they've had a positive introduction to Shakespeare. We will be buying another set of 60 minute Shakespeare books for next year

What I Liked:When I was in high school, we "sampled" Shakespeare. I remember reading a snippet of Macbeth and maybe a summary of it, but that was it. To be honest, I wasn't terribly fond of the bard, although I do appreciate some of his better-known quotes - I still have the first 5 lines of "To be, or not to be" memorized. With this series, I'm able to get a complete, albeit fast, meal - so I got a nice taste of the comedy side of Shakespeare's writing in *Much Ado About Nothing*. The scenes flow together well; it doesn't feel like chunks are missing. And it is most definitely still in beautiful Shakespearean English. Footnotes help the reader understand certain words and phrases. I think this series would be interesting to work through as a high school co-op group, with multiple people participating to read the different parts. **What I Didn't Like:**I've got nothing negative to say about the abridgment of the book - that is very well done. However, I'm not a big fan of some of Shakespeare's darker themes and the "double, double toil and trouble" stuff. I'm still undecided on whether his literary genius outweighs the death speak and irreverent humor of some of his characters, which you find even in comedies such as this one.

I got this book so that my family could do a living room performance in one night. Although I am fairly pleased with how it was shortened, I found many typos that needed to be corrected before we could even read it. I had to sit down with the full text to check it all the way through. An obvious example is when Beatrice says to Benedick "You always end with a jade's trick. O know you of old." (It should be "I know you of old.") If you are only buying one copy, this isn't too hard to do and is easier than buying the full text and cutting the lines yourself. If you are buying several copies for a classroom, however, correcting the typos would be a lot of work. If you are buying this book to read the play, buy the full text, this is one of Shakespeare's shorter plays and one of our favorites.

Cass Foster's version of Shakespeare's popular comedy has all the right ingredients for staging "*Much Ado*" with high school students. He edits the text to eliminate much of the parallel speech while retaining the brightest of the lines. Shakespeare's many metaphors and images, though brilliant, can tend to confuse the average audience. Foster's script loses none of the important lines or images, and none of the audience members either, as he culls the text to focus on important action and interaction in the play. Also offering definitions of archaic Elizabethan words and ample

space for director's notes, this script gets two thumbs up.

The book is very interesting, much like other from Shekspeare. The story of two cuples gettig married is very old. But the way the two cuples fall in love is very new and refreshing. This work has the characters of drama as well as those of drama. This book falls in to chategory of must read it!

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